DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 447 513 CS 510 420

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TITLE	Using Audience Analysis as a Learning and Evaluation Tool.
PUB DATE	2000-03-00
NOTE	8p.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Audience Analysis; Class Activities; Classroom Techniques; Feedback; Higher Education; Instructional Effectiveness; Introductory Courses; Learning Activities; *Public Speaking; Questionnaires
IDENTIFIERS	Questions

ABSTRACT

This paper describes an activity that is not only effective for teaching audience analysis to introductory public speaking students, but also serves as an instructor feedback tool. The activity outlined in the paper takes students through every step of the audience analysis process, from selecting question types to tallying and formulating results. To help the instructor develop the activity, the paper provides a purpose statement, a list of materials needed, time requirement, and a rationale. Includes a sample dispositional audience analysis questionnaire. (NKA)

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Using Audience Analysis as a Learning and Evaluation Tool

ED 447 513

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-Student Submission-

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According to Lucas (1998) there are three questions effective speakers should ask themselves prior to making a speech: 1) who is my audience, 2) what do I want to inform or persuade my audience to do, believe, or learn, and 3) how can I design a speech that takes into account the answers to questions one and two?

The answers to these questions will affect every stage of the speech-making process, from the selection of a topic to the delivery of the speech, and can best be found by administering an audience analysis. However, the task of creating an audience analysis can be a daunting one for introductory public speaking students, and the task of teaching it equally as daunting for introductory public speaking students, and the task of teaching it equally as daunting for the public speaking instructor. Students are frequently unsure about what type of question to use, how each question should be phrased, the type of data that can be extracted from a certain question, and how their audience analysis should be formatted and tallied.

The following activity has proven to be effective in making audience analysis easier for students to understand and instructors to teach. It takes students through every step of the audience analysis process, from selecting question types to tallying and formulating results, while providing the instructor with valuable feedback on his or her teaching performance.

Purpose Statement

The goal of this activity is to help public speaking students understand the purpose of a dispositional audience analysis questionnaire, identify the three basic types of questions used in the questionnaire, practice completing an audience analysis, and provide feedback to the instructor about the course and the effectiveness of teaching strategies.

Necessary Materials

The instructor will need to create an audience analysis in which teaching speech is the topic (see author's example titled "Dispositional Audience Analysis Questionnaire"). Questions should focus on effectiveness of teaching, relevance of course material, feelings toward instructor, anything pertinent to the manner in which the course is taught or the course itself. Questions should include fixed-alternative, scale, and open-ended questions (Lucas, 1998).

The instructor will need copies of the audience analysis for each student as well as an overhead transparency that is identical to the copies.

Approximate Time Required

The activity and debriefing take approximately 25 to 30 minutes.

Rationale

Viewing an example of an audience analysis questionnaire as well as completing one gives students a better idea of how to create an audience analysis questionnaire than through lecture alone.

This activity appeals to 1) visual learners through the use of an overhead transparency, 2) audio learners through a step-by-step explanation of the questionnaire (in conjunction with the transparency), and 3) tactile learners through the completion of the questionnaire. This audience analysis is also useful in providing valuable student feedback to the instructor regarding course content and teaching.

Activity

This activity should replace a formal lecture on audience analysis. To begin, place an overhead transparency of the audience analysis that you created on the overhead projector, using a clean sheet of paper to conceal sections of the audience analysis.

Since the audience analysis is segmented into sections based on question type, begin with the fixed-alternative section. Define a fixed-alternative question, discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using this type of question, provide examples of the kind of data that can be extracted from this type of question (statistics, testimony, etc.), and show students the fixed-

alternative questions created for the analysis as examples. Repeat this process for scale and open-ended questions.

Leave the audience analysis transparency in view and distribute the copies of your audience analysis to each student. Give the class approximately 5-8 minutes to complete the questionnaire depending on its length; collect the questionnaire when students finish. Debrief.

Prior to the next class session, review the questionnaires and tally student responses. Write tallied responses on the audience analysis transparency used in class with a transparency pen and bring to next session. Use transparency to demonstrate questionnaire tallying, and to show students their collective responses. Explain how their responses will help you adapt your curriculum to better meet their needs, and relate it to how they will be using their audience analysis to adapt their speech to meet the needs of their audience.

Debrief

Remind students of the purpose of an audience analysis, the types of questions that comprise an audience analysis, and the process of completing and analysis. Answer any questions they might have regarding audience analysis, and tell them you will share the results of the questionnaire during the next class session.

Appraisal

This activity gives consideration to the fact that every classroom is made up of several different types of learners, thus leading to more effective learning of the audience analysis concept. Not only do students see an example of the questionnaire while being offered an explanation, but they are also able to complete a questionnaire, which gives them an additional opportunity to understand audience analysis question types on an individual basis.

This activity is helpful to the instructor as well, in that he or she is able to receive student feedback regarding course content and teaching effectiveness prior to the end of the semester without being formally evaluated. The instructor can then make changes to curriculum and teaching style to better meet the learning needs of students.

Bibliography

Lucas, S. (1998). The art of public speaking. Boston: McGraw-Hill.

EXAMPLE DISPOSITIONAL AUDIENCE ANALYSIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Topic: Teaching Speech

Fixed Alternative Questions (Yes, No, I don't know)

1. Will this speech course help you meet some of your career/academic goals?
   Yes _____ No _____ I don't know _____

2. Are you feeling less apprehensive and more confident about future speeches?
   Yes _____ No _____ I don't know _____

3. Do you periodically review the syllabus and course/assignment requirements?
   Yes _____ No _____ I don't know _____

Scale Questions (Circle the extent to which you agree or disagree with these statements)

4. My instructor seems willing to answer questions and offer assistance with assignments.
   Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

5. Assignment instructions and requirements are clear to me.
   Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

6. My instructor cares about my progress in this course.
   Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

7. Our classroom environment is comfortable, familiar, and encouraging.
   Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

Open-ended Questions (Short answer)

8. How can the instructor help you to learn more effectively? More activities? More lecture?
   Feel free to comment on any of the above question topics.

9. What are your feelings about this course at this point?